Top Five Reasons Why Plywood Shutters are an Unsound Choice

"Covering your windows and doors with plywood should only be a last-resort alternative to actual storm shutters." *(Federal Alliance for Safe Homes, 2009)*

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"…heavy plywood or metal shutters can sit unused in garages or storage sheds, leaving some unlucky homeowners at risk simply because no one could help them deploy their shutters. Even when help is available, some don't take advantage of it because of the expense."(Business Wire, 2008)

"…plywood shutters can be quite heavy, especially those configured for larger windows. Many injuries have occurred as people try to install these shutters by themselves…" (Business Wire, 2008)

"While you can nail plywood shutters as a last resort just before a storm strikes, repeatedly putting them up and taking them down will damage the area around your windows and doors, and ultimately affect anchorage quality ."(The Weather Channel, 2009)

"Plywood that is not properly attached to your house can rip off during high winds and become a projectile that can cause serious harm to your and your neighbor's property." (Federal Alliance for Safe Homes, 2009)

1. It Rarely Gets Deployed

The majority of plywood purchased for storm protection never makes it out of storage. Due to difficulty in deployment, plywood is often left stacked as a nuisance, and thus doesn't provide any real protection at all. In the event of an approaching storm, stores can not keep up with the sudden demand for plywood, leaving homes and businesses unprotected as owners scramble to find materials.

2. It Cracks Under Pressure

Plywood is not approved for Miami-Dade County or High Velocity Hurricane Zones. Due to a failure to withstand Miami-Dade testing criteria plywood was not given valid product approval for building protection. The Miami-Dade County product approval system has a total quality control standard; products must pass approval for testing, fabrication and installation, making it one of the most stringent in the industry. Failing to meet these criteria means that windows are vulnerable to breakage, making them entryways for water, wind and debris. This also puts homeowners in a dangerous position as internal pressurization occurs increasing the risk of complete structural failure.

3. Plywood Can be Hazardous to Deploy

The thickness and span of plywood makes it a significant hazard to deploy. Multiple square feet provide a sail-like surface for the wind to impact. A 4X8 sheet of the minimum ½ inch thick plywood weighs approximately 40-45 pounds and a 4X8 sheet of ½ inch OSB weighs approximately 55 lbs. Carrying a sufficient number of sheets to cover all window openings is impossible for the majority of people, making deployment contingent on hired help, which is scarce in the event of an impending storm. This fact further compounds the issues outlined in # 1 above. The weight of plywood combined with its surface area make it extremely dangerous to carry up a ladder. Once in place, plywood traps inhabitants in the home, blocks light and escape routes, and creates a fire hazard.

4. Plywood is a Temporary Last Resort

Plywood does not retain its durability. Stacked for storage plywood will often warp, grow mold, mildew and attract termites. Holes drilled for attachment widen and lose strength with each storm. In addition to being unsightly, the plywood taking up space in your home is most likely damaged and needs to be replaced. Experts state that new plywood should be purchased every 4-6 years depending on climatic conditions. Additionally, plywood damages the exterior of the home, leaving unattractive holes and marks which must be filled and re-painted after each use at the homeowners expense.

5. Plywood is Difficult to Install Correctly

Due to the difficulty in deploying plywood, it is rarely used at all. However, in the rare event that it *is* deployed, it is often secured incorrectly. Common problems with installation include the number, location, size, and quality of fasteners, the location and size of holes drilled, the thickness of the plywood and type of plywood used. A statewide spot inspection in Florida revealed that only two plywood installations of all those examined were deployed according to building codes. However, both failed full compliance by using non-approved ¼ inch plywood (Leggett, 2004). Plywood that is installed incorrectly becomes vulnerable to detachment, often joining other dangerous items as windborne debris.

Over time, plywood will end up costing the homeowner more than alternative, advanced wind mitigation solutions.